

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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R 040715Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 679

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 2427

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: LEE KUAN YEW'S SPEECH ON SEASIAN SECURITY

SUMMARY: LEE DECLARED THAT THE CENTRAL QUESTION FOR SE ASIAN COUNTRIES WAS HOW TO MAXIMIZE THEIR FREEDOM OF CHOICE IN THIS MULTI-POLAR WORLD. HE STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE US NOT REDUCING ITS INFLUENCE FASTER THAN IT NEEDED TO AND POINTED OUT THAT MUCH ALSO DEPENDED ON THE CAPACITY OF REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS TO ADJUST POLICIES IN LINE WITH COMMON INTERESTS. LEE DISPARAGED FOREIGN INTERVENTION IN PHILIPPINE SULU PROBLEM THROUGH "CONTACTS IN THE REGION" AND DESCRIBED EFFORTS BEING MADE TO "COOL OFF THE MISUNDERSTANDING OVER THE SULU PROBLEM IN THE PHILIPPINES" AS A REFLECTION OF THE BEGINNINGS OF REGIONAL AWARENESS. LEE STATED THAT CHINA'S RELATIONS WITH KUALA LUMPUR WOULD BE "IMPECCABLE" IN ORDER TO ENSURE DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION IN OTHER ASEAN COUNTRIES. HE PREDICTED THAT CHINA WOULD BE REPRESENTED IN ALL THE SEACOUNTRIES IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS. ALTHOUGH SOME OBSERVERS HERE THINK SINGAPORE WILL NOW

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MOVE MORE QUICKLY TO RECOGNIZE PEKING, EMBASSY

BELIEVES GOS WILL REN M CAUTIOUS. THIS WAS FIRST
TIME LEE HAS SPOKEN OUT ON PHILIPPINES SULU
PROBLEM, AND HIS IMPLIED CRITICISM OF MALAYSIA
MAY WELL BE RESENTED IN KUALA LUMPUR. END SUMMARY.
(BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED.)

1. PM LEE KUAN YEW, IN A SPEECH BEFORE CONFERENCE
ON SE ASIAN SECURITY (SPONSORED JOINTLY BY INTERNATIONAL
INSTITUTE OF STRATEGIC STUDIES, LONDON, AND LOCAL
SOUTHEAST ASIA STUDIES INSTITUTE) STRESSED THE
IMPORTANCE OF THE US AS A BALANCING FACTOR IN THE
EQUATION OF BIG POWER POLITICS IN THE REGION. "THE
CENTRAL QUESTION" FOR COUNTRIES OF SEA WAS "HOW TO
MAXIMIZE THEIR FREEDOM OF CHOICE IN THIS MULTI-POLAR
WORLD." MUCH DEPENDED UPON THE "POLITICAL NERVE AND
DIPLOMATIC SKILL" OF THE US IN NOT REDUCING ITS
INFLUENCE FASTER THAN IT NEEDED TO, " THEREBY
TRIGGERING IMPULSIVE REACTIONS ON THE PART OF THE
SOVIET UNION AND CHINA TO MOVE IN FASTER THAN THEY
NEEDED, OR WERE READY TO."

2. LEE EMPHASIZED THAT IT ALSO DEPENDED ON THE CAPACITY
OF REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS TO ADJUST THEIR POLICIES SO
AS NOT TO HARM THEIR COMMON INTERESTS. "EACH GOVERN-
MENT MUST SPECIFICALLY AVOID POLICIES WHICH MAY BE
BILATERALLY ADVANTAGEOUS BUT REGIONALLY DELETERIOUS."
HE CITED AS AN EXAMPLE THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTHERN
PHILIPPINES WHERE ARMS WERE ALLEGEDLY PROCURED FROM
OUTSIDE THE REGION. ANY DISSIDENT GROUP, WHETHER IN
NON-MUSLIM MAJORITY (PHILIPPINES AND THAILAND) OR
MUSLIM MAJORITY (INDONESIA) COUNTRIES "THAT
RECEIVES A BOOST THROUGH CONTACTS WITHIN THE REGION
WITH SUCH COMMON CAUSE FUNDS FROM OUTSIDE THE REGION
WILL SOONER OR LATER SET OFF A CHAIN REACTION FOR
SIMILAR INFLOWS FROM OTHER FUNDS, FOR OTHER
COMMON CAUSES. IN THE END SUCH INTERVENTIONS ARE
A GRAVE DISSERVICE TO THE COLLECTIVE INTERESTS OF
ALL." LEE FELT THAT "ELABORATE" CONTACTS
IN ASEAN PRIOR TO MALAYSIA'S INITIATIVE ON CHINA, AND
PERHAPS EVEN MORE SIGNIFICANTLY THE EFFORTS BEING
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MADE TO "COOL OFF THE MISUNDERSTANDINGS OVER THE
SULU PROBLEM IN THE PHILIPPINES" REFLECTED THE BEGINNINGS
OF REGIONAL AWARENESS.

3. LEE NOTED THAT CHINA'S IMMEDIATE INTEREST IN SEA
WAS TO CHECK INCREASING SOVIET INTEREST. FOR THE
IMMEDIATE FUTURE CHINA'S RELATION WITH KUALA LUMPUR
WOULD BE "IMPECCABLE," IN ORDER TO ENSURE DIPLOMATIC

REPRESENTATION IN THE OTHER ASEAN COUNTRIES. CHINA COULD AFFORD TO WAIT BEFORE WIDENING ITS ACTIVITIES TO INCREASE ITS OWN INFLUENCE BARRING "UNTOWARD DEVELOPMENTS," CHINA WOULD BE REPRESENTED IN ALL THE SEA COUNTRIES IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS." HE THOUGHT THAT WITH THE BENEFITS OF ITS EXPERIENCE IN INDONESIA AT THE TIME OF GESTAPU IN 1965, CHINA HAD SEEN THE DANGER IN ENCOURAGING SUBVERSION AND INSURGENCY AND LEARNED THE LIMITS OF USING CHINESE ETHNIC AND CULTURAL SENTIMENTS TO SPUR THESE PURPOSES. HOWEVER, IN THE LONG RUN, SEA HAS "TO LEARN TO LIVE WITH CHINA." (END UNCLASSIFIED)

4. (BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL) COMMENT: LEE'S SPEECH HAS ATTRACTED CONSIDERABLE PRIVATE COMMENT WHICH HAS FOCUSED MOSTLY ON HIS REMARKS ON SEA/PRC RELATIONS AND HIS MENTION OF THE PHILIPPINE SULU PROBLEM. HIS REMARKS GIVE IMPRESSION THAT HE IS CLEARLY AWARE PRC MAY REVERT TO SUBVERSION ONCE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS ARE ESTABLISHED WITH ASEAN COUNTRIES, BUT HE ACCEPTS THE INEVITABILITY OF SUCH RELATIONS AND TENDS TO GIVE PRC THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT CONCERNING ITS ULTIMATE CONDUCT IN THE AREA. EMBASSY BELIEVES THIS WAS SAID LARGELY FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION AND THAT LEE IS ACTUALLY QUITE SKEPTICAL OF PRC LONG RANGE INTENTIONS IN THE AREA. SOME LOCAL OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT SINGAPORE MAY NOW BE PREPARED TO MOVE MORE QUICKLY THAN BEFORE IN RECOGNIZING PEKING. HOWEVER, EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT WHILE GOS MAY STEP UP CONTACTS AND RECONNOITER THE TERRAIN MORE ACTIVELY, IT WILL REMAIN CAUTIOUS.

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5. ADDRESS REPRESENTED FIRST OCCASION THAT LEE HAS PUBLICLY MENTIONED PROBLEM OF SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES. HIS REMARKS APPEAR TO IMPLY SOME CRITICISM OF MALAYSIA AND MAY WELL BE RESENTED IN KUALA LUMPUR. IN CONVERSATION WITH DCM, SENIOR MALAYSIAN HIGH COMMISSION OFFICIAL WAS CLEARLY UNHAPPY ABOUT THIS ASPECT OF THE ADDRESS. GRANT

NOTE BY OCT: #AS RECEIVED.

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